

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress  
2nd Session

Vote No. 154

May 23, 1996, 3:50 p.m.  
Page S-5520 Temp. Record

## BUDGET RESOLUTION/Amtrak Funding

**SUBJECT:** Senate Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1997-2002 . . . S. Con. Res. 57. Roth amendment No. 4025.

### ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 57-43

**SYNOPSIS:** As reported, S. Con. Res. 57, the Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal years 1997-2002, will balance the Federal budget in fiscal year (FY) 2002 by slowing the overall rate of growth in spending over the next 6 years to below the rate of growth in revenue collections. The rate of growth in entitlements such as Medicare, Medicaid, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, and the Earned Income Credit will be slowed. No changes will be made to the Social Security program, the spending for which will grow from \$348 billion in FY 1996 to \$467 billion in FY 2002. Defense spending will be essentially frozen at its present level.

**The Roth amendment** would express the sense of the Senate:

- that revenues attributable to one-half cent per gallon of the excise taxes imposed on gasoline, special motor fuel, and diesel that is currently put in the Mass Transit Account should be dedicated to a new Intercity Passenger Rail Trust Fund during the period January 1, 1997, through September 30, 2001;
- that revenues would not be deposited in the Intercity Passenger Rail Trust Fund during any fiscal year to the extent that the deposit would result in available revenues in the Mass Transit Account being insufficient to satisfy that year's estimated appropriations levels;
- that monies in the Intercity Passenger Rail Trust Fund should be generally available to fund, on a reimbursement basis, capital expenditures incurred by Amtrak; and
- amounts to fund capital expenditures related to rail operations should be set aside for each State that has not had Amtrak service in such State for the preceding year.

**Those favoring** the amendment to table contended:

(See other side)

YEAS (57)			NAYS (43)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (15 or 28%)	Democrats (42 or 89%)		Republicans (38 or 72%)	Democrats (5 or 11%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Bennett	Akaka	Kennedy	Abraham	Helms	Conrad		
Burns	Baucus	Kerrey	Ashcroft	Hutchison	Glenn		
Chafee	Biden	Kerry	Bond	Inhofe	Graham		
Cohen	Bingaman	Kohl	Brown	Kassebaum	Heflin		
D'Amato	Boxer	Lautenberg	Campbell	Kempthorne	Nunn		
DeWine	Bradley	Leahy	Coats	Kyl			
Hatch	Breaux	Levin	Cochran	Lugar			
Jeffords	Bryan	Lieberman	Coverdell	Mack			
Lott	Bumpers	Mikulski	Craig	McCain			
Murkowski	Byrd	Moseley-Braun	Dole	McConnell			
Nickles	Daschle	Moynihan	Domenici	Santorum			
Pressler	Dodd	Murray	Faircloth	Shelby			
Roth	Dorgan	Pell	Frist	Simpson			
Snowe	Exon	Pryor	Gorton	Smith			
Specter	Feingold	Reid	Gramm	Stevens			
	Feinstein	Robb	Grams	Thomas			
	Ford	Rockefeller	Grassley	Thompson			
	Harkin	Sarbanes	Gregg	Thurmond			
	Hollings	Simon	Hatfield	Warner			
	Inouye	Wellstone					
	Johnston	Wyden					

#### EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

#### SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea  
AN—Announced Nay  
PY—Paired Yea  
PN—Paired Nay

The Roth amendment would put the Senate on record as believing that Amtrak should be given a secure source of financing over the next several years that is no less favorable than that provided for other transportation modes. Amtrak needs that funding to make capital improvements. The amendment would express support for the creation of a new, intercity rail trust fund, which would be financed through gas tax funds that currently are deposited in the mass transit account. This proposal has already been endorsed by both the Finance Committee and the Commerce Committee. It would result in \$2.5 billion in Amtrak capital improvements over the next 5 years.

Amtrak is the best transportation alternative for millions of Americans. Its \$2.2 billion budget directly generates some 25,000 jobs nationwide, and more than 33 million Americans across the country commute to work on Amtrak-operated systems. Amtrak is especially important in the densely populated Northeast. Traffic congestion is extreme, both on the roads and at the airports. Expanding Amtrak services is by far the cheapest, safest, most environmentally sensitive alternative for handling the rapidly expanding transportation needs of this region.

The Amtrak system is semi-private, and we hope that it will operate entirely without subsidies some day. It is making progress—in 1981, just 48 percent of its revenues were self-generated. Today, 80 percent are. Even with its subsidies, though, it is the most cost-effective investment in transportation the Federal Government makes. Amtrak currently receives less than 3 percent of all Federal transportation spending. In the past 15 years, the amount spent on it has declined by nearly 50 percent, while it has climbed by 78 percent for aviation programs and 48 percent for Federal highway programs. We are not guilty of overinvesting in Amtrak.

Amtrak's future economic health depends on new capital investments. With new equipment, Amtrak will attract a substantial number of new riders, plus it will reduce its expenses by slashing the amount of money it spends each year repairing old, worn-out equipment. The result will be that Amtrak will no longer need its current Federal operating subsidies of \$60 million. By providing this capital funding, we will be able to finish the privatization of Amtrak. We support that end, and thus urge the acceptance of this amendment.

**Those opposing the amendment contended:**

The Roth amendment would create a brand new entitlement for Amtrak. Every penny spent would be direct spending—Congress would not control it. In these difficult fiscal times, the last thing Congress should do is create a new uncontrollable spending program. On this basis alone the Roth amendment should be rejected. It should also be rejected because it would siphon funds from the Mass Transit Account. That account is used to pay for local mass transit projects. The riders of local mass transit systems are typically the working poor, the disabled, and the elderly. For these people, local mass transit systems are usually their primary, and frequently their only, means of transportation. Amtrak ridership, though, serves people with much higher incomes. One study we have seen states that, "travel on Amtrak by persons with incomes above \$40,000 is 3.5 times higher than intercity buses and nearly 1.5 times higher than airlines." We do not favor cutting local mass transit subsidies for systems that the working poor need to get to their jobs and that elderly Americans need to get to their doctors' appointments. We certainly do not favor doing so in order to pay for increasing Amtrak subsidies so that we can squire about wealthy Americans on shiny new trains. The final reason we have for opposing this amendment is that the money for this spending proposal is going to have to come from somewhere. When the Mass Transit Account is reduced to pay for this Amtrak funding, all that will be reduced is the number of IOUs in the account. That account, like all Federal trust funds, does not contain cash, it contains promises of future spending. Therefore, agreeing to the Roth amendment is going to create more pressure on the budget. More revenue will have to be raised or borrowed, or other spending will have to be cut. We do not favor increasing the pressure on the budget; we do not favor taking money from local mass transit and giving it to Amtrak; and we do not favor creating a new entitlement program. We therefore oppose the Roth amendment.